



INTENTIONAL AND UNINTENTIONAL INJURY HEALTH RISKS AMONG RHODE ISLAND HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

*Rhode Island Department of Education
in collaboration with the
Rhode Island Department of Health*

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This summary highlights selected information on behaviors which affect the risk of intentional and unintentional injuries among Rhode Island high school students, based on results of Rhode Island's 1997 Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS). The YRBS is an anonymous and voluntary survey conducted in alternate years among randomly selected samples of high school students in each of 46 participating states and territories nationwide. It was developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to monitor health-risk behaviors that contribute to the major causes of mortality, disease, injury and other health and social problems among youth and adults in the United States.

During the Spring of 1997 the 84-item multiple choice YRBS was administered to 1,528 randomly selected Rhode Island public school students in grades 9 through 12. With a response rate of 60.0%, results of the survey can be considered representative of all Rhode Island public school students in grades 9 through 12.

For additional information or a more detailed report contact Cynthia Corbridge, RI Department of Education (401) 222-4600 ext. 2106 or Jana Hesser, Ph.D., Office of Health Statistics, RI Department of Health (401) 222-2550.

K *KEY FINDINGS*

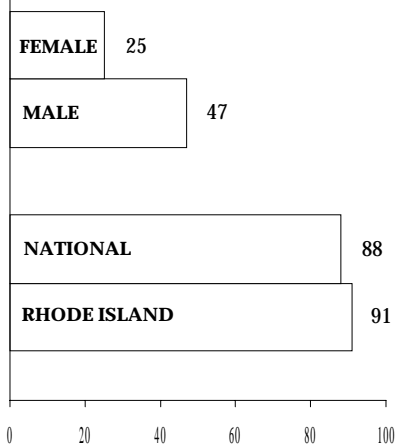
- ✓ Seat belt use can reduce motor vehicle fatalities by between 40% and 50% and serious injuries by between 45% and 55%. Increasing the use of vehicle safety belts to 85% could save an estimated 10,000 American lives per year. 1997 YRBS data indicates that 33% of Rhode Island students rarely or never wear a safety belt when riding in a vehicle driven by someone else and that only 24% always wear a safety belt. Rhode Island's rate of safety belt non-use is higher than the rate reported on the national YRBS (19%).
- ✓ Alcohol-related traffic crashes cause serious injury and permanent disability and rank as the leading cause of spinal cord injury among adolescents and young adults. 1997 YRBS results indicate 46% of Rhode Island 12th grade students reported riding in a vehicle with an operator who had been drinking, one or more times during the 30 days preceding the survey. Further, 33% of Rhode Island 12th grade students reported operating a vehicle after drinking, one or more times during the 30 days preceding the survey. The rates in Rhode Island are higher than they are nationally.
- ✓ Though Rhode Island's rates of violence on school property are lower than national rates, 6% of students indicated they did not go to school on one or more of the 30 days preceding the survey because they felt unsafe at school or on their way to or from school. Nationally only 4% of students indicated feeling this way.
- ✓ Suicide is the third leading cause of death among youth ages 15 to 24. 1997 YRBS results indicate that 24% of Rhode Island students seriously considered attempting suicide and 10% attempted suicide in the 12 months preceding the survey. These percentages are slightly higher than national YRBS results for 1997 (21% and 8% respectively).

Unintentional Injuries: Vehicle Related Behaviors

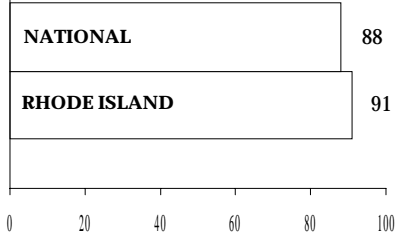
Risk Behavior: Lack of helmet use

Rationale: Head injury is the leading cause of death in motorcycle and bicycle crashes. Unhelmeted motorcyclists are two times more likely to incur a fatal head injury and three times more likely to incur a nonfatal head injury than helmeted riders. In addition, the risk of head injury for unhelmeted bicyclists is more than 6.5 times greater than for helmeted riders.

Percent of students who rode a motorcycle and never or rarely wore a helmet.



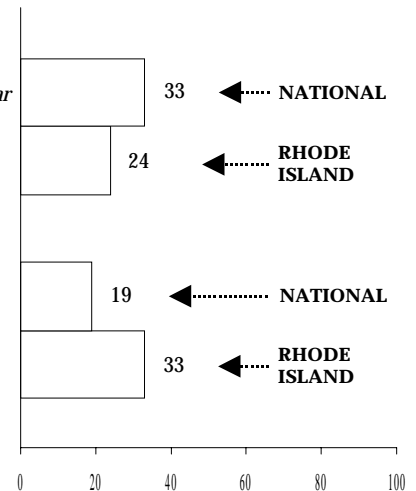
Percent of students who rode a bicycle in the past 12 months and never or rarely wore a helmet.



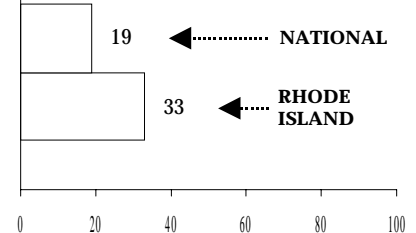
Risk Behavior: Lack of motor vehicle seat belt use

Rationale: Seat-belt use is estimated to reduce motor vehicle fatalities by 40 to 50 percent and serious injuries by 45 to 55 percent. Increasing the use of automotive safety restraint systems to 85 percent could save an estimated 10,000 American lives per year.

Percent of students who indicated they always wear a seat-belt when riding in a car.



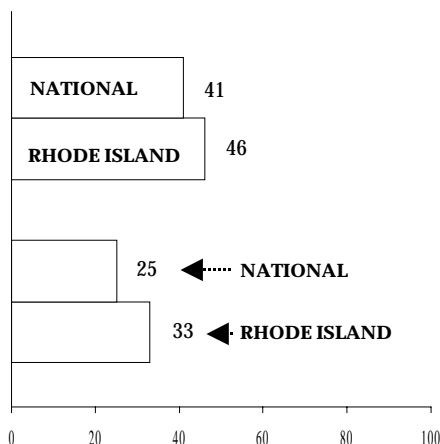
Percent of students who indicated never or rarely wearing their seat-belt.



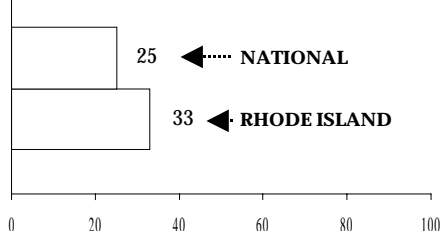
Risk Behavior: Alcohol use and driving

Rationale: Motor vehicle accident injuries, approximately half of which involve alcohol, are the leading cause of death among youth ages 15 - 24 in the United States. Alcohol-related traffic crashes cause serious injury and permanent disability and rank as the leading cause of spinal cord injury among adolescents and young adults.

Percent of 12th graders who reported riding in a motor vehicle with an operator who was under the influence of alcohol.



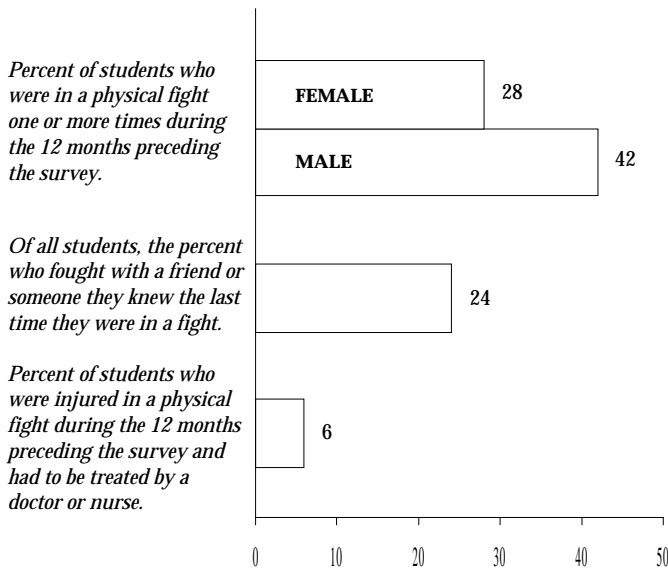
Percent of 12th graders who reported operating a motor vehicle while under the influence of alcohol.



Intentional Injuries: Violence Related Behaviors

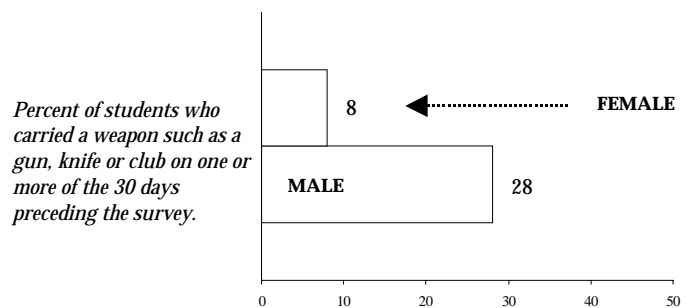
Risk Behavior: Physical fights

Rationale: Homicide is the second leading cause of death among all youth ages 15 - 24 and is the leading cause of death among black youth ages 15 - 24. Nonfatal violence (i.e., fighting) often precedes fatal violence among young persons.



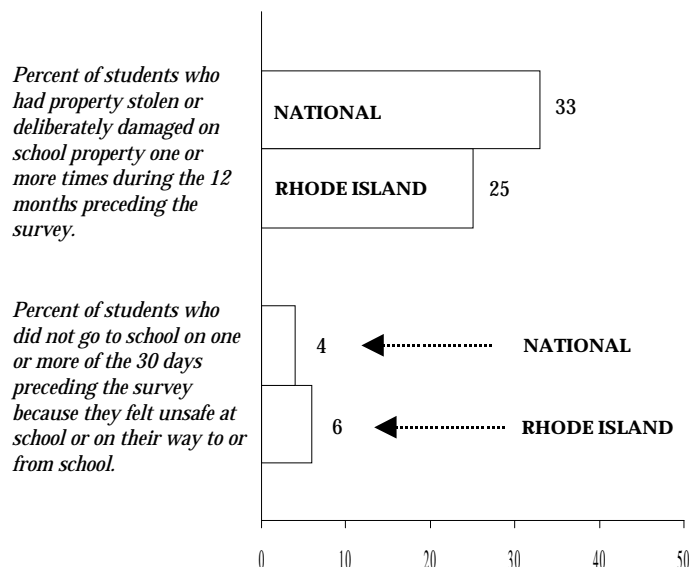
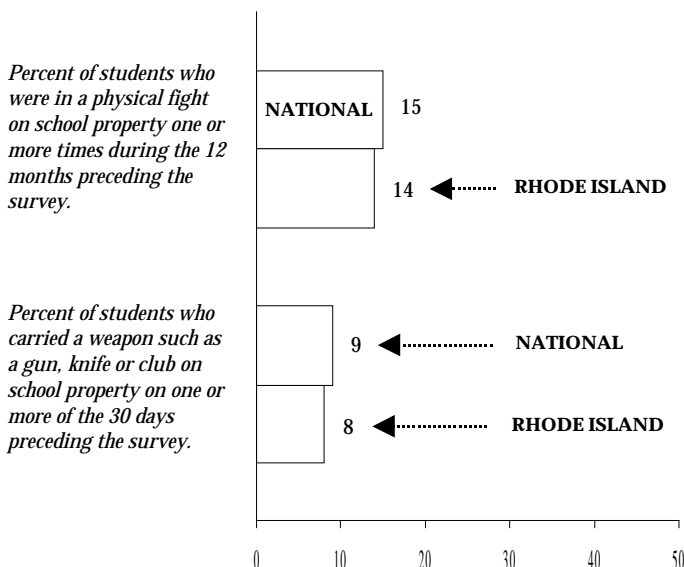
Risk Behavior: Weapon carrying

Rationale: Approximately nine out of ten homicide victims in the United States are killed with a weapon of some type, such as a gun, knife or club. During adolescence, the homicide rate increases 15 times, from a negligible rate of 0.9 per 100,000 at age 10 to 13.9 per 100,000 by age 20. The immediate accessibility of a firearm or other lethal weapon often is the factor that turns a violent altercation into a lethal event. Firearm-related suicides, which tripled between 1950 and 1980, account for 60 percent of adolescent and young adult suicides. Unintentional firearm-related fatalities also are a critical problem among children and young adults in the United States.



Risk Behavior: Violence on school property

Rationale: See above.



Intentional Injuries: Suicide Related Behaviors

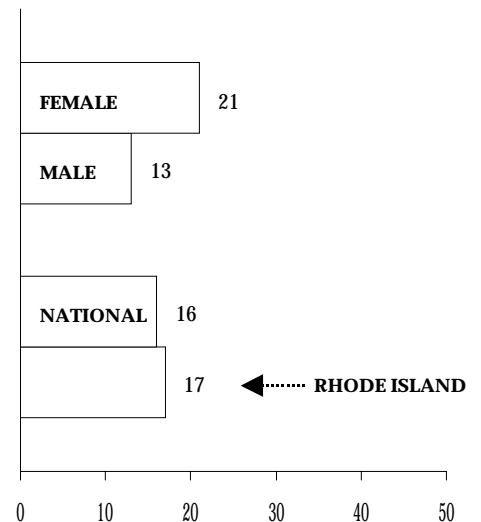
Risk Behavior: Suicidal ideation and attempts

Rationale: Suicide is the third leading cause of death among youth ages 15 - 24 and the second leading cause of death among white males ages 15 - 24. The suicide rate for persons ages 15 - 24 has tripled since 1950.

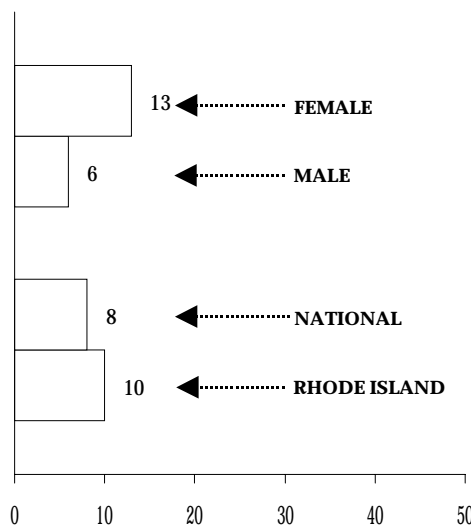
Percent of students who seriously considered attempting suicide during the 12 months preceding the survey.



Percent of students who made a plan about how they would attempt suicide during the 12 months preceding the survey.



Percent of students who actually attempted suicide one or more times during the 12 months preceding the survey.



Percent of students who attempted suicide during the 12 months preceding the survey which resulted in an injury, poisoning or overdose that had to be treated by a doctor or nurse.

